

For sale: One million silver dollars in 1980

By Roger Boye

BEGINNING EARLY next year, the federal government will sell nearly one million rare Carson City silver dollars minted in the 1800s, the United States General Services Administration (GSA) has announced.

Most of the coins will be sold at fixed prices, although the 55,000 rarest dollars (dated 1880, 1881, and 1885) will be sold separately in a nationwide mail auction. Prices will be announced before each sale, with either fixed prices or minimum-bid prices determined by market conditions at the time.

Last April, a panel of coin experts suggested that the 1883 and 1884 Carson City dollars be sold for \$30 each and that coins in a "mixed-date" category be offered at \$20 each. The panel also recommended that the three rarest dates be sold with a minimum bid price of \$100 a coin. GSA executives have said they will follow the panel's advice closely.

The dollars are the balance of some 2.9 million Carson City silver dollars discovered in a Treasury vault in 1964. Almost two million of the coins were sold from 1972 to 1974 in a series of sales that was discontinued because the market was saturated.

In the earlier sales, Carson City dollars dated 1880, 1881, and 1885 cost \$60 each; 1883 and 1884 dollars were \$30 each; and dollars in the mixed-date category cost \$15 each.

Those who want information and order forms should send a postcard with name and address, including zip code, to Carson City Silver Dollars, San Francisco, Cal. 94170. Dates of the sale will be announced in a few weeks, and order forms will be mailed several days before the sales begin.

In the last five months, the GSA has received more than 60,000 letters about the sale.

IN A MAJOR break with tradition, the U.S. Mint will put a "P" mint mark on all Philadelphia-produced coins, except the cent, beginning in 1980.

In addition, the "D" mint mark will be taken off all pennies made in Denver in 1980. That also is unusual, because coins produced at the branch mints usually bear mint marks.

"At present, there is considerable withdrawal from circulation by collectors of 'D' marked one-cent coins," a mint official said. By eliminating mint marks from cents next year, government officials believe that more cents will circulate.